

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MEXICO CITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1917

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: OCON, IWY, CE

SUBJ: SRI LANKA DELEGATION TO WORLD CONFERENCE ON
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR (WCIWY)

REF: STATE 129496

1. SRI LANKA'S FIVE MEMBER DELEGATION TO WCIWY
ANNOUNCED JUNE 16. IN ADDITION TO PRIME MINISTER,
MRS. SIRMAYO R.D. BANDARANAIKE, DELEGATION WILL
COMPRISE TWO MPS, TAMARA KUMARI ILANGARATNE AND
VIVIANNE GOONEWARDENA, CHIEF OF PROTOCOL MANEL
ABEYSEKERA AND DR. SWARNA JAYAWEEERA, EDUCATOR.
MRS. ILANGARATNE CHOSEN TO LEAD DELEGATION.
FOLLOWING BIO MAY BE USEFUL:

A. VIVIANNE GOONEWARDENE, 58, HAS REPRESENTED
COLOMBO SUBURB IN PARLIAMENT FOR MORE THAN DECADE,
AND IS PROMINENT MEMBER OF LANKA SAMA SAMAJA
(TROTSKYITE) PARTY AT PRESENT PART OF GOVERNING
COALITION. HER OPPOSITION TO BRITISH BEFORE WORLD
WAR II, UNDERGROUND ACTIVITIES, AND FLIGHT TO INDIA
EARNED HER A TOP PLACE IN LSSP HIERARCHY IN COLOMBO
AND MORE RECENTLY ON NATIONAL LEVEL. CONTENTIOUS
AND ARTICULATE, SHE REMAINS STAUNCH ADVOCATE OF
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RADICAL CHANGE. HUSBAND IS MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS

AND ONE OF LEADERS OF LSSP PARTY. SHE SPEAKS ENGLISH WELL AND CAN BE DEPENDED UPON TO HAVE SOMETHING PROVOCATIVE TO SAY IN MEXICO CITY.

B. TAMARA ILANGARATNE, ABOUT 60, IS SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) MP AND WIFE OF MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND INTERNAL TRADE. SHE SAT IN PARLIAMENT FROM 1949-52, BUT, ALTHOUGH A CONSTANT CANDIDATE, WAS NOT RE-ELECTED UNTIL 1970. PROMINENT IN WOMEN'S AFFAIRS AND SLFP POLITICS, MRS ILANGARATNE SHARES HER HUSBAND'S STRONG LEFTIST SENTIMENTS BUT HAS LITTLE INDEPENDENT IMPACT.

C. MANEL ABEYSEKERA, WHO ASSUMED PROTOCOL OFFICE LAST YEAR, WAS CEYLON'S FIRST FEMALE CAREER DIPLOMAT, WITH SERVICE IN LONDON, ROME AND BANGKOK (AS CHARGE). SHE HAILS FROM A PROMINENT COLOMBO FAMILY, AND IS ARTICULATE AND CHARMING.

D. DR. SWARNA JAYAWEERA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AT SRI LANKA'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, HAS EARNED HIGH MARKS AS EDUCATOR. SHE RECEIVED YEAR LONG GRANT FROM AMERICAN WOMEN'S FEDERATION CIRCA 1973 AND USG ASSISTED WITH TRAVEL FUNDS. A POLITICAL, DR. JAYAWEERA PROBABLY MOST INTELLECTUAL AND ARTICULATE MEMBER OF DELEGATION.

E. PM'S MEXICO VISIT IS LATEST OF HER SEVERAL RECENT INTERNATIONAL EXCURSIONS WHICH HAVE KEPT HER ABROAD MOST OF LAST TWO MONTHS. HER COUNTRYMEN ATTACH CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO HER POSITION AS WORLD'S FIRST WOMAN PM AND INDIRA GANDHI'S NON-ATTENDANCE MAY KUT MRS. BANDARANAIKE MORE IN SPOTLIGHT.

2. ALL GSL DELEGATES SPEAK ENGLISH, MOST VERY WELL. POST'S EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS GOONEWARDENE AND ILANGARATNE MAY ROAST U.S. IF OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED, BUT ON PRIVATE BASIS NO PROBLEMS LIKELY.
VAN HOLLEN

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